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SUBJECT: Codel Costello Visits ES Aircraft Maintenance Facility

¶1. Summary. A 16 person Congressional delegation led by Jerry Costello (D-IL) visited El Salvador February 28 - March 1. The primary purpose of the visit was to see the Aeroman aircraft

maintenance facility. The CODEL also met with other aviation and transportation officials in the public and private sectors, including U.S. air carrier officials, and saw the Cooperative Security Location at Comalapa airport. They were particularly impressed with the aircraft maintenance operations at Aeroman. End Summary.

The Delegation

¶2. The CODEL was led by Congressman Jerry Costello (D-IL), the Chairman of the Aviation Subcommittee of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. The other Members of the delegation were Henry Brown (R-SC), Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Cliff Stearns (D-FL) and Mazie Hirono (D-HI). Congressman Capuano had to cancel his visit at the last minute. The Assistant Director of the Office of Interparliamentary Affairs of the Office of the Speaker of the House and FAA Associate Administrator for Aviation Safety Nicholas Sabatini came with the Representatives. Five Staffers and four military escorts also accompanied the delegation.

Aviation Focused Visit

¶3. After a Country Team meeting with Ambassador Glazer, the delegation went to the Aeroman aircraft maintenance facilities located at Comalapa airport. Currently, Aeroman services Jet Blue, US Airways and TACA jets. Aeroman expects to announce an agreement with Southwest Airlines in April for Aeroman to service Southwest jets. Two senior managers from JetBlue joined Aeroman's presentation and emphasized Aeroman's high quality standards and high worker morale as key factors in their success.

¶4. After the Aeroman presentation and tour of their facilities, Congressman Costello said he was impressed with their operations. Another delegation member complimented Aeroman on the strict parts and inventory controls used by the company. A third delegate said Aeroman was better than some US facilities he had seen. One of the Staffers commented positively on the incentive pay structure used by Aeroman as an incentive to achieve quality control and client satisfaction. Aeroman said that they had been audited over 40 times in 2007, which also helped keep their quality of work very high.

¶5. Following the Aeroman facilities visit, the CODEL had a briefing at the Cooperative Security Location (CSL). They heard first hand about the success of the CSL, even with limited resources, to combat illegal drug trafficking through aerial surveillance. They were also interested to hear about the latest methods used by drug traffickers to evade detection and how the CSL (and the traffickers) continue to change their tactics in response to one another's moves.

¶6. The delegation met with other aviation and transportation officials from the public and private sectors at a reception at the Ambassador's residence. On Saturday, they met with U.S. air carriers. American Airlines said it was expanding its operations in El Salvador with additional flights to and from Miami and opening a new route to Dallas. American, Delta and Continental all said they had seen increased traffic, but mentioned that Salvadoran-based TACA had a solid grip on the Central American regional air traffic.

¶7. This cable has been cleared by CODEL Costello.

GLAZER